SAMUEL JOHNSON'S POLITICAL IDEAS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON HIS WORKS

BY

ROBERT BORGIA ORLOVICH

B.A., University of Illinois, 1929

M.A., University of Illinois, 1930

AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH,
IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE
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SAMUEL JOHNSON'S POLITICAL IDEAS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON HIS WORKS

The purpose in the dissertation, of which the following pages are an abstract, was to examine the writings and conversations of Johnson in order to present a detailed study of his political ideas and to determine what influence, if any, his politics had on his literary works. Although it must be readily admitted that the Johnson of the conversations was often quite different from the Johnson of the literary works, it is evident that a failure to consider the table-talk and anecdotes recorded by Johnson's contemporaries, especially by Boswell, would have resulted in an incomplete picture. Possessed of a quick temper, tenacious of his opinions, and hating to be worsted in argument, or at times even to be contradicted, Johnson had a tendency to utter in his talk explosive comments which hardly represented his true beliefs. On certain occasions, his talk seemed to contradict what he had written. At other times, especially when he and Boswell had retired from a group in which Johnson loved to display his conversational ability, it supplemented and crystallized the views Johnson had expressed in print. Boswell's ability to imply Johnson's true belief's by some overt remark about the conversation or the situation is not the least of his gifts as a great biographer.

Books, pamphlets, and magazine articles on Johnson are legion. Whether they liked or disliked the man and his works, critics and readers have agreed that they found in Johnson characteristics which made him one of the most interesting men of letters who ever lifted a pen. That fact alone would justify a study of Johnson's political ideas. When it is remembered that Johnson's moral opinions, religious views, critical dicta, and animated conversations inspired many systematic and detailed studies, but that his political ideas, though discussed often, received no equally extensive notice, the justification becomes even more evident. Numerous critics have passed by Johnson's political works in silence; others have mentioned them briefly —as a rule, apologetically—and hurried on to something else. It is as if his beliefs have been considered so obvious or unimportant that they needed no explanation.

According to prominent Johnsonians, the present century has witnessed an increase in the number of discriminating readers attracted by Johnson's works. The remarkable discoveries in recent years of the Boswell papers at Malahide Castle and Fettercairn House, while focusing the main light on the biographer, have also renewed

interest in his great friend and subject. R. W. Chapman's efforts towards a monumental edition of Johnson's letters; A. T. Hazen's study of the prefaces and dedications, an indication of growing concern about the Johnson canon; L. F. Powell's definitive revision of Hill's Boswell; R. B. Adam's record of the greatest collection of Johnsoniana; W. P. Courtney's bibliography of the works, revised by D. N. Smith; A. L. Reade's indispensable gleanings of many hitherto unknown facts in Johnson's life—all are symptomatic of a quickened and scholarly interest. With all their shortcomings, books by men like Christopher Hollis, Hugh Kingsmill, Robert Lynd, and John Bailey have served the beneficial purpose of keeping Johnson before the public. The attempt to analyze Johnson's political ideas naturally included an examination of what these men and others had written about Johnson.

Despite frequent temptations to submit wholeheartedly to the enchantment of interesting anecdotes, the present writer tried to maintain an essentially objective approach and to concentrate on Johnson's own statements in his works. Such an approach necessitated a careful analysis of Johnson's arguments. It did not, in the opinion of the present writer, imply a duty to refute or even to censure the arguments. Fortified by the hindsight of history, one finds it difficult to refrain from interrupting when Johnson draws the roseate pictures of arbitrary government or from applauding when he expresses in dignified language the obligations of civilized society to the individual. Wherever personal reactions or interpretations appeared in this study, the writer was under the impression that his remarks would have come from the general reader in the light of the evidence presented.

In order to give a brief sketch of Johnson's actual position, and to determine what to expect from him in general, the first section of this study consists of a discussion of Johnson as a political thinker and as a philosopher. Available evidence indicates that Johnson, in the technical sense, was neither a politician nor a philosopher. His references to political theorists show no intimate knowledge of works in their field. Nor do they convince the reader that Johnson actually understood the character of the men themselves. Although curiosity several times led him to the point where he flirted with the idea of taking an actual part in politics, he was never an official participant engaged in conducting the business of the State, or even of a locality. A number of his friends, including William Gerard Hamilton and

Henry Thrale, undoubtedly took suggestions from him. But politics was not his profession or his business; in fact he looked with disfavor on "scribblers of a party." His true place was that of an onlooker interested in politics as the science affects life, and interested in the practice more than in the theory.

An investigation of Boswell's *Life,* of contemporary opinions, and of Johnson's own works implies that Johnson was not a man with a profoundly philosophical mind, a man able to furnish a system of political theory without actually having been a politician. The survey reveals that Johnson had a fund of information about ancient philosophers and their doctrines, and that the tone of his statements reflects a familiarity not manifested in the comments. He had no deep interest in medieval philosophy. It may be said that he was more interested in modern philosophy, especially in modern English philosophy, but still his interest was not that of a specialist. The most likely conclusion, based on the evidence, is that one could not expect from him any metaphysical explanation of the science of politics or any systematic presentation of the abstract principles of different political theories. His political ideas came from a man of the world, not from a systematic and profound thinker. As a result, his statements often seem contradictory.

From biographical and critical notices, there emerged at least three important conceptions of Johnson as a political thinker: (1) that he was a thorough conservative, interested only in preserving the past, and characterized by a stern and prejudiced antagonism to any innovation; (2) that he was a strong conservative, but justifiably so because he prevented the radical infusion of novel and impractical ideas; and (3) that he fundamentally was not a blind conservative, but a man who, though he was prone to treat brusquely whatever implied Whiggism, was distinctly a humanitarian ready to go beyond literal Toryism, and ever on the lookout for means of improving society. Shortly after the appearance of Croker's edition of Boswell's *Life* in 1831, Macaulay attacked the book in a review which popularized the first conception, and Carlyle, not long thereafter, wrote an unfavorable notice of Croker which popularized the second. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, George Birkbeck Hill did more than any other man to popularize the third. In his own day, Johnson was both the idol of staunch conservatives and the target of political satirists. A generation later, his manly force, bold spirit, and impetuous nature appealed to Scott, Byron, and Hazlitt, but it

was only natural that the romantic writers in general considered him the political representative of a bygone age. Influenced by the opinions of men like Leslie Stephen, John Morley, and Hill—men who pointed out the liberality of mind in a Tory—the attitude of twentieth-century readers, though not generally favorable, is not as intensely unfavorable as that of earlier readers.

That Johnson accepted and continued the political prejudices of his father and the pious convictions of his mother is an opinion expressed time and again in Johnsonian criticism. Thus an account of the family, with a discussion in some detail of Michael Johnson's politics, seemed a necessary preliminary to a consideration of Johnson's political beliefs. Relying mainly on A. L. Reade's *Johnsonian Gleanings* for information about Johnson's early life, the author of this study has examined evidence concerning the Johnson family, the community of Lichfield, Johnson's early formal education, his residence in Oxford, and his activities in the Midlands from 1729 to 1737. It is clear that Johnson's environment was peculiarly suitable for the inculcation and retention of sentiments highly favorable to monarchy and established religion. His father was a High Churchman and a Tory dissatisfied with the results of 1688. His mother's faith in the power of royalty led her to risk a trip to London that her son might be touched by Queen Anne in 1712. At least one of his early teachers, John Hunter, was a confirmed Jacobite. His native community, Lichfield, which had supported the Stuarts throughout the civil wars, remained loyal to the exiled family in opposition to George I, persisted in its Jacobitism during the troublesome days of 1745, and, even as late as 1778, retained its traditional Toryism to such an extent that Boswell was surprised to find a Whig in the county. From this Jacobitical stronghold, Johnson went to Oxford in 1728. The political ideas transmitted by Michael Johnson and encouraged by John Hunter were not likely to be disparaged in an institution which accepted the Hanoverians against its will, and then only after long opposition. Although our knowledge of Johnson's career at Oxford, especially of his political activities or beliefs, is not detailed enough to be wholly satisfactory, his failure to express adverse views either in his writings or in his conversations at least implied agreement. On the whole, facts relating to Johnson's life before he and Garrick left for London in 1737 point to the conclusion that his family, early education, residence in Oxford, and activities in the Midlands inculcated and strengthened the principles of the

Tory right wing. Embodying the conservative attitude of his parents and of his associates in a small provincial town, he profoundly respected Church and State as the best things established by the wisdom of the past and defended by law and morality. It was apparent, however, that Johnson, even as a young man, possessed an independent character which prevented him from becoming merely a follower.

Once he reached London in 1737, Johnson learned at first hand that political power was vested in Robert Walpole and in the great Whig families who controlled the wealth of the nation. The years from 1737 to 1748 have been designated as Johnson's period of struggle. More interested in finding means of subsistence and carving a niche for himself in the metropolis than in writing for a party, Johnson nevertheless touched the political controversies of the day. Critics have assigned various influences and aims to Johnson's literary efforts of the time. Whether his productions as a free-lance writer and employee of Edward Cave were literary imitations of authors who deplored the neglect of literature, journalistic pot-boilers designed to give a popular audience what it wanted, magazine hackwork necessitated by poverty, or effusions inspired by "patriotic" sentiments of politicians like Bolingbroke, most of them, with the exception of some reviews, prefaces, and biographies, had a common political purpose—they were enthusiastically anti-Whig and anti-Hanoverian. In *London* (1738), *Marmor Norfolciense* (1739), and the ironic *Vindication of the Licensers of the Stage* (1739), Johnson drew a vivid picture of London as a city hostile to science, commerce, theaters, and law-abiding citizens. It was a perfect environment for parasitical foreigners, unscrupulous attorneys, granters of pensions, and collectors of excise. A corrupt and powerful ministry suppressed freedom of speech and of the press; it maintained a large standing army, imposed exorbitant taxes at the expense of the land-owners, sacrificed English honor to preserve a disgraceful peace, neglected literature or noticed it only to persecute it, and combined secrecy and corruption to perpetuate its own power. In *Marmor Norfolciense,* the author made a direct attack against Walpole and the Hanoverians. His sarcasm was strongest at the moment he professed "zeal for the happy establishment."

From a political point of view, a number of his contributions to the *Gentleman's Magazine* were significant. His biographical accounts of Blake and Drake (1740) were direct attempts to increase national patriotism. Distrusting colonization and exploration and be-

lieving that all men, including savages of remote lands, were entitled to life and happiness, he emphasized the bravery, honesty, and kindness of earlier admirals, without intending, he said ironically, any parallel between their achievements "and those of our present admirals." In the biographies mentioned, Johnson's purpose was obvious. In the reports of parliamentary proceedings written by Johnson and published by Cave in the *Gentlemen's Magazine* (1741-44), the writer's intentions were not so apparent. Since no thoroughly faithful record of the actual speeches exists, it is impossible to compare Johnson's reports with the originals and in that way learn what he retained and what he altered. Sufficient evidence is available to prove that his accounts were not verbatim reports. That the Whigs should not have the best of it, he handled details freely at their expense. He shortened speeches or omitted them altogether, cast a brilliant light on weak points in Whig arguments by repeating them or presenting them in exaggerated detail, and in other ways favored the arguments of the Tories. After a careful reading of the *Debates,* but still perhaps at the risk of doing Johnson an injustice, the present writer concluded that they supported the ideas expressed in Johnson's earlier works.

Johnson has often been accused of strong Jacobitism and, consequently, of political tergiversation when he ultimately defended the policies of the government of George III. His previous background and his early literary works in London strongly implied that he was zealous in the cause of the Stuarts, at least until 1745. The gap in our knowledge of his life during that period has called forth a series of conjectures, some of which advance surprising hints about his presence in the Pretender's army. The claim that he joined the Pretender has not been proved. It is clear, however, that Johnson was violently opposed to George I and George II, and that he seems to have had little sympathy with the Hanoverians until the accession of George III in 1760. He came to feel that the Hanoverians had a satisfactory—though not an inherent—right to the throne, and he undoubtedly would not have made a great effort to restore the Stuarts after 1760. Yet in spite of his loyalty to the English government and his defense of government policies in his political tracts, Johnson seems never to have loved the House of Hanover.

Johnson's writings during the period between 1737 and 1748 unquestionably placed him within the ranks of the Opposition. Just where, one cannot say exactly. In spite of his belief that the Revo-

lution of 1688 had been necessary, his emotional responsiveness to the cause of the new rulers was not sufficiently genuine to have made him a good Hanoverian Tory. In spite of his evident attachment to the memory of the Stuarts, we have no record of any definite activity to prove that he was actually a confirmed Jacobite. Needless to say, he was neither a genuine "Patriot" nor a Country Whig. He seems to have fitted in most naturally with those High Church Tories who opposed changes in the established religion and who obeyed constituted authority out of respect for civic duty rather than because of a conviction that the new conditions had solved the problems of 1688. As far as we know, his influence in contemporary politics was negligible. Walpole seems to have disregarded him.

Johnson the Tory remained hostile to the successors of Walpole, repeating charges of secrecy and corruption which he had made against earlier Whig administrations. He believed the Whigs in power were acting, not in the interests of the people, but in the interests of their own party; they were defending their conduct in the name of liberty and patriotism. They enabled "upstarts with money" to enter Parliament, discriminated against the "gentleman of landed property," conducted wasteful wars, paid subsidies and levied troops to protect Hanoverian possessions on the continent, influenced popular elections by "weekly libels and septennial ale," and enforced harsh laws against the poor and feeble.

A figure of note among his contemporaries, the moral essayist, lexicographer, and critic of literature continued in his admiration for the British Constitution and in his respect for authority in Church and State. It was immediately apparent, however, that his respect for authority and his arguments in favor of political subordination came from a man whose essentially conservative outlook easily yielded to the expression of liberal sentiments. In spite of numerous petulant reactions to Whig policies and comments indicative of literal Toryism, Johnson's writings soared above the level of mere party prejudice. The *Rambler,* the *Idler,* the *Vanity of Human Wishes, Rasselas,* and essays contributed to the *Adventurer* contain evidence that their author was attentive to defects in the English social and political system. Noticing that laws for the poor were deficient, he called for active interference and beneficial legislation by the central government. Deploring the severity of the penal code, he advocated leniency, believing that "proper discipline and useful labour" were better than "vindictive and coercive justice." His defense of lawful and settled

authority was by no means a belief in absolutism. A government will be opposed vigorously, he said, when the admiration of the governed "is dissipated by such wickedness and folly as can neither be defended nor concealed." *Rasselas,* a tale of sadness and a testimonial to the fact that happiness, if it is to be found at all, is to be found "in the reasonable hope of a happy futurity," contains a political message in the lectures of Imlac to the young prince—perfection in government is as impossible as perfection in other things, but the more closely governors approach it in the maintenance of justice, the greater they become as governors. It was the same Imlac, we remember, who instructed Rasselas that "those who have kingdoms to govern, have understandings to cultivate."

Most of Johnson's political comments during the period are to be found in those works of his which are least read. In brief writings such as the *Preface to Dodsley's Preceptor,* the *Introduction to the Political State of Great Britain,* the *Introduction to the World Displayed,* the *Observations on the State of Affairs in 1756,* the *Introduction* to the proceedings of a committee appointed to manage the contributions for clothing French prisoners of war, *Further Thoughts on Agriculture,* and *On the Bravery of English Common Soldiers,* Johnson spoke of the English people as "secondary legislators," asked for popular education, defended the individual's right to own private property, advocated resistance to authority when required for self-preservation, attacked slavery as a condition unfit for mankind, and referred to the necessity of ruling by immediate force as one of the greatest of political evils.

The political prejudices Johnson voiced in his *Dictionary* did not pass unnoticed by his readers. The present writer went through the work carefully, with the expectation, in view of the attacks made, of finding Tory bias on every page. Concentrating upon those definitions which offered an unquestionably biased political view, the investigator concluded that they were less numerous than readers have ordinarily been led to believe.

It is not difficult to notice that the Johnson whom we meet in the literary works between 1748 and 1770 is more flexible and liberal than the Johnson pictured by Boswell. The implication that he may have been emphasizing popular causes because he was attacking abuses in the government of the Whigs cannot be ignored. The moralist and humanitarian, however, was genuinely interested in the lives of men all about him rather than in any abstract political theory.

Early in 1762, the Crown granted Johnson a pension of three hundred pounds a year. After the Tories returned to power in 1770, Johnson wrote four political tracts defending the policies of the government. Although he was accused of political tergiversation and servile acquiescence in supporting arbitrary measures, it cannot be said that his political pamphlets were the inevitable effects of his pension. In spite of the fact that the pension could have been terminated at any time, Johnson continued to treat the subject of the Stuarts with great deference and expressed his dissatisfaction with the ministers or the reigning family whenever he was so inclined. He may have written the political tracts because he was so grateful for his pension, because he was complimented by the solicitation of men in power, or because he believed that the nation was genuinely in need of what he had to say. When the country was agitated by the controversy over Wilkes' experiences with the House of Commons, when England was in danger of war with Spain over the rights to some islands Johnson deemed unimportant, and when a revolt was imminent in the American Colonies, it is not inconceivable that Johnson wrote the opinions expressed in the tracts without the urging of Lord North.

An analysis of the political tracts makes this point clearer. *The False Alarm* (1770) sought to prove that the Commons had the right to expel and exclude any member or candidate in general, and John Wilkes in particular, from a seat in the House. After the Middlesex Election of 1768 had brought up an important constitutional question and when the right of free election seemed in danger, Johnson embarked on a series of arguments casting reflections upon the intelligence of the electors, the character of the duly elected member, and the petitions of voters whom he called "patriots," opposing merely for the sake of rebelling against constituted authority. He argued effectively that a legislative group should be stronger than any single member if it is to function properly, but he neglected the point that if a legislative group acquires the right to invalidate elections for reasons not covered specifically by a text of law it can prevent electors from returning the candidate of their choice. *Thoughts on the Late Transactions respecting Falkland's Islands* (1771) expressed Johnson's belief that the Opposition was ready to plunge into war with Spain and repeated his attacks against "patriots." Praising the administration because he felt it was acting wisely in being cautious, he included an admirable passage on the evils of warfare. According

to the author, wars seldom, if ever, cure the ills which brought them on, and it is the innocent who suffer most. With few exceptions, the only alteration is an increase in debt and taxes. Wars are justifiable only when national honor is obviously insulted or when national liberty is actually threatened. Quite often nations do not even know why they are fighting. *The Patriot* (1774) was an attempt to vindicate once more the conduct of the Commons in the Middlesex Election, to support his friend Henry Thrale, the Ministerial candidate for Southwark, to oppose "the ridiculous claims of American usurpation," to attack the men Johnson considered pseudo-patriots, and to explain the character of the true patriot. The true patriot, he said, uses power with equity, respects liberty of conscience as a natural right, and defends both the honor of his country and the privileges of its people. He does not blindly suggest innovations, spread false alarms, or maliciously attack those in office. *Taxation No Tyranny* (1775) was Johnson's answer to the Colonists and their sympathizers. According to the author, the Colonies were settled under English protection, were constituted by an English charter, and were protected by English arms. Their refusal to pay for their own defense had not deterred them from seeking representation. They accepted English protection, and thus implied submission to government. Having defended the Colonies, the mother country had the right to govern them.

When Johnson wrote the political tracts, he was violently prejudiced in favor of the causes he supported and unlikely to give due regard to the arguments of those who disagreed with him. His language was too personal and too passionate for convincing argument. On the whole, the political tracts show Johnson the Tory at his worst.

In the latter part of this study, the writer concentrated on Johnson's political ideas during the last decade of his life. Most of the evidence concerning the literary works appeared in the *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* (1775) and in the *Lives of the English Poets* (1779-81). Over a long period of years, Johnson had told his readers and listeners that Scotchmen were clannish and jealous of other people, that they told lies for Scotland and for each other, that they reaped economic benefits from the Union without contributing their own share, and that their national characteristics enabled them to flourish in London. Some of his prejudices were obvious in the *Journey*. He emphasized the backward manners and poor quarters of certain parts of the nation, and said Macpherson's countrymen

accepted the genuineness of *Ossian* for patriotic rather than logical reasons; he censured Presbyterianism, called Scotch universities the centers of a mediocrity of knowledge, and commented unfavorably on the number of beggars in Scotland. Although he was prone to exaggerate the immediacy and perhaps the extent of English influence, Johnson tried to consider the problems of the mountaineers and islanders with sympathy and fairness. He respected the Jacobites for their loyalty and praised the Highlanders for their civility and martial spirit. The absolutism of the chieftains, he said, had been responsible for a great deal of suffering, and he was glad to notice indications of more equitable legislation. The English had done much, but they could do more. The Disarming Act often exposed the people to danger, and unfavorable economic conditions forced them to emigrate. In order to satisfy the people and stop their flight to America, the English, Johnson implied, should resort to diplomacy rather than force.

An investigation of the *Lives of the English Poets* revealed the touchstones Johnson applied in criticizing political ideas and movements. According to his point of view, the period of the Commonwealth was a gap in legal government, the Restoration a joyful acceptance of rightful sovereignty, the Revolution a necessary but painful remedy, and the reign of William a period of illegal rule. He was disappointed in the Tories of Queen Anne's time and disgusted with the early Hanoverians. A glance at Walpole's successors convinced him that the great minister had been head and shoulders above the others. The important fact brought out in the discussion of the *Lives* was that Johnson's political prejudices unquestionably affected his interpretation of biographical incidents and character studies of the poets. It was also apparent that his criticism of strictly political writings was strongly influenced by his own political beliefs. Although the present writer occasionally felt that he could detect political bias in Johnson's criticism of literature in general, he was unable to reach a definite conclusion based on satisfactory evidence.

The reader who wishes to ascertain the effect on Johnson of English politics from 1775 to 1784 will find it necessary to read his conversations and letters. He remained hostile to Americans, underestimated the French, ridiculed the weakness of successive ministries, and opposed parliamentary reforms. All things considered, Johnson, during the last decade of his life, was a strong conservative who distrusted innovation, respected order in society and authority in gov-

ernment, advocated political subordination, and disliked politicians and their customary modes of procedure.

At the risk of extreme generalization, it may be possible to summarize the cardinal tenets in Johnson's political philosophy. Johnson wrote no single political treatise to explain in detail his opinions of society, the prerogatives and limitations of the Crown, the characteristics and privileges of Parliament, and the rights of the people. Despite the fact that his humanitarian tendencies enabled him to recognize and appreciate the qualities of the individual as a human being, Johnson placed national security before civil rights. A staunch Tory, he was an admirer of the old Constitution in Church and State, a conservative who believed there was more danger to public and private rights in theories of individual emancipation than in possible executive encroachments. Admiring custom and precedent, considering human experience as the best criterion for judgments, and defending institutions as the finest creations of human endeavor, he was suspicious of innovations in religion, literature, and politics. He was sure that civilized society, the only type of life he considered desirable, was not formed because of mutual selfishness or fear; it was the result of man's effort to express his social nature. It is a condition of mutual interdependence and assistance, of charity and individual sacrifice. Arguments for absolute rights are illogical. A civilized society will protect both public and private rights through the maintenance of justice by law. If civilized society is to exist, it must be characterized by unity, order, and stability.

To define and realize human rights, both of the people and of the individual, some form of authority, which will permeate the body politic, is indispensable. Unless the State has power sufficient to enforce its decisions, individuals will not obey; unless it has respect in addition to power, individuals will only obey against their will. Without obedience proceeding from recognition of duty and admiration for law, the State cannot function properly. Thus it may be taken for granted, Johnson believed, that the State should be just and benevolent as well as powerful. Because the conditions indispensable for a civilized society are the primary concern of the State, it has the right to defend and improve them. Among the indispensable conditions emphasized by Johnson are religion and moral conduct, a system of political and social subordination, a right to possess private property, an opportunity for popular education, a decent provision for the poor and feeble, and, above all, a right of individual self-

preservation. The just and benevolent State will not resort to blind force, powerful pride, or corruption. But, for its own preservation and for the good of its subjects, collectively and individually, it will exercise the right to prohibit dangerous opinions, especially in religion, education, and politics.

That monarchy is the best form of government was clearly Johnson's opinion throughout his writings. It was not merely a sentimental attachment to kings or to kingship, but a belief that a strong patriotic ruler could best serve his people. Gifted with unusual talent, moral character, and a sense of responsibility, the king could act both as a symbol of unity and as an executive force. By concentrating power in one source, he could insure unity of policy and possibility of enforcement. By utilizing the respect and love of his subjects for an institution comprehensible to all, he could defend their rights against the encroachments of unscrupulous politicians in Parliament and elsewhere; he could be his own minister rather than merely the head of any single political party, and he could justifiably exert influence over Parliament for the good of the nation. Johnson knew, of course, that all kings are not wise, just, and benevolent. His love for monarchy never caused him to support royal absolutism. Referring to the situation in the time of James II, he told his listeners that whenever a choice has to be made between the people and the king it is right to decide against the king. Although he felt that the Crown should be able to exert influence over Parliament, he warned that such influence must not reduce Parliament to a "corrupt and shameful dependence." On the whole, Johnson's belief that absolute princes seldom do harm was not explained satisfactorily, although it is clear that he did not favor absolutism. Nature, he said, contains a remedy against tyranny. The people will rise up and cut off the tyrant's head.

According to Johnson, the Whigs limited the prerogative of the Crown in order to further their own interests. By corruption and secrecy, by legislation favorable to commercial groups at the expense of the landed gentry, and by "false alarms" about royal assumption of popular rights, they endangered the Constitution. Instead of being "founded on the parliament, then in the privy council, then in the King," the English government was passing into the hands of politicians who could be bribed. The House of Commons, he said, originally was not a privilege of the people, but a check used by the king against the House of Lords. Freed from royal control, the popular legislative assembly did not make "noble stands" comparable

to those of the Lords. It made concessions to minority groups and dared not "contradict the populace." It seems to have forgotten that its duty was to act as a larger council to the king. Johnson often accused the Houses of timidity, secrecy, weakness, and corruption. But he would not allow others to do so. The men of property, he insisted, thwarted the desire of the Whigs to make bad laws.

"In republicks," Johnson told Boswell, "there is not a respect for authority, but a fear of power." Johnson's dislike for broad popular government is well known, and his impatience with arguments in favor of liberty has become notorious. He opposed equal representation, satirized public petitions, distrusted popular elections, and belittled the intelligence of the average voter. As a moralist, he believed in the equality of mankind. As a humanitarian, he appreciated the dignity of the individual. As a political thinker, he divided the people into at least three groups—those who were able to govern, those who were intelligent enough to assist in making good laws possible, and those who had neither the intelligence to understand nor the ability to oppose selfish politicians. Taking pride in his conviction that he was a man of the world and a realist in politics, he argued that the English form of government protected individual rights to the extent that every intelligent Englishman was a "secondary legislator." Because he was convinced, mistakenly or not, that an Englishman's private life was not hampered by legislation, he interpreted pleas for "liberty" and "patriotism" as political catchwords rousing the populace and endangering national security. An orderly, stable, and unified State, a ruler strong enough to merit respect and obedience while guarding the interests of his subjects against the desires of influential factions, a privy council and a parliament acting as advisory bodies to the king but commanding sufficient authority to protect the people against tyrannical measures, and a constitution controlling the agencies of government—these are the conditions, according to Johnson, necessary for good government.

This study has emphasized the fact that a knowledge of Johnson's political beliefs is a distinct aid, if not a necessity, in understanding Johnson the writer and the man. Readers have often learned from Boswell, from later biographers and critics, and from Johnson himself, that Johnson was not deeply interested in party politics, in political gossip, or in ephemeral public affairs. To be sure, he was not a specialist in political science or an admirer of politicians and their customary modes of procedure. If the term politics is used in a broad

sense, however, the fact readily becomes apparent that Johnson was profoundly interested in the relationship between the individual and his government.

Because of a lack of specific information, the study has failed to offer satisfactory answers to a number of significant questions. We know too little, for instance, about Johnson's residence at Oxford and his activities in the Midlands to decide whether he took part in political discussions or remained aloof. Since a comparison of his *Parliamentary Debates* with the actual speeches is not possible, conclusions relating to them flit disturbingly in the realm of conjecture. Neither Boswell nor later biographers have told us exactly where Johnson was or what he did during the years 1745 and 1746. If the information becomes available, it may be that we shall find some interesting and conclusive statements to make about Johnson's Jacobitism. It must be admitted also that, in the light of existing evidence, we cannot decide with sufficient certainty the relationship between Johnson's pension and his political pamphlets.

The investigator believes, however, that he has made some important contributions. So far as he knows, his dissertation is the first detailed and chronological study of Johnson's political ideas. Without attempting to corroborate or refute previous estimates, he feels that they have been based ordinarily on the more famous productions from Johnson's pen or on the political tracts exclusively. It is only logical to suppose that many of the critics were thoroughly familiar with Johnson's works and with his political opinions. The fact remains that their discussions of his politics have been so brief or general that they failed to give a concurrent view of Johnson's remarks and the political aspects, episodes, and details which occasioned them. Their readers could detect the fundamental principles underlying Johnson's comments, but they did not receive a detailed account of specific reactions to particular current events.

Interested primarily in the relationship between Johnson's political ideas and his literary works, the present writer feels that he has reached a number of important conclusions. Despite his support of arbitrary measures in the political tracts, Johnson the writer was more liberal on the whole than Johnson the conversationalist as portrayed by Boswell. Vitally interested in the problems of the individual and of society, he was more than an acquiescent follower of a single political party. It cannot be denied that Johnson was often guilty of petulance and narrowness in politics. But his writings, especially

between 1738 and 1770, are permeated with liberal tendencies. Without denying in the least that Johnson was a staunch conservative, it may be necessary to modify the traditional picture of the belligerent Tory who frowned on all attempts to liberate the individual in politics.

The study has shown that discussions of political subjects are more frequent and extensive in Johnson's works than people have been led to believe. It has shown also that Johnson's minor writings are important in a consideration of his political ideas. Finally, it has brought out the significant point that Johnson's politics exerted a noticeable influence in his writings, and that, consequently, a knowledge of his politics may contribute to a better understanding of the man and his work.

VITA

Robert Borgia Orlovich, the son of Mary (Stulich) and Daniel Orlovich, was born on January 6, 1906, in Rockdale, Illinois. He was graduated from Joliet Township High School in 1925. In the fall of 1925, he entered the University of Illinois, from which he was graduated with the degree of Bachelor of Arts in June of 1929. After a year of graduate study at the University of Illinois, he received the degree of Master of Arts in English in June of 1930. From 1930 to 1940, he was an assistant in English at the University of Illinois and continued his graduate studies. Since the fall of 1940, he has been an instructor in English at Iowa State College, Ames, Iowa, and, in addition to his teaching, has completed the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, of which this thesis is a part.